

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

EUGENE HINTON,

Plaintiff,

v.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY, et al.,

Defendants.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action

No. 16-cv-06492 (JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES:

Eugene Hinton, Plaintiff Pro Se
711 Clinton St.
Camden, NJ 08104

SIMANDLE, Chief District Judge:

1. Plaintiff Eugene Hinton seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the State of New Jersey, the Camden County Jail ("CCJ"), and corrections officers. Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

2. Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must sua sponte dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to sua sponte screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

3. For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

4. To survive sua sponte screening for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014) "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

5. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages from the State of New Jersey, CCJ, and certain corrections officers¹ for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. As the CCJ is not a "state actor" within the meaning of § 1983, the claims against it must be dismissed with prejudice. See, e.g., *Grabow v.*

¹ Plaintiff lists as defendants the "3rd floor CO's," the "5th floor CO's," and the "Admissions CO's." Complaint § I.

Southern State Corr. Facility, 726 F. Supp. 537, 538-39 (D.N.J. 1989) (correctional facility is not a "person" under § 1983).

6. Plaintiff's claims against the State of New Jersey also must be dismissed. The Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution provides: "The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State." U.S. Const. amend. XI. Plaintiff may not bring a suit against the State in federal court unless Congress has expressly abrogated New Jersey's sovereign immunity or the State consents to being sued in federal court. *Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 66 (1989). Here, Congress did not expressly abrogate sovereign immunity when it passed § 1983, see *id.*, and there is no indication New Jersey has consented to Plaintiff's suit. The claims against the State of New Jersey must be dismissed with prejudice.

7. Plaintiff has named broadly some corrections officers, however, and may be able to amend the complaint to name state actors who were personally involved in the alleged unconstitutional conditions of confinement. To that end, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

8. Plaintiff is advised that the amended complaint must plead sufficient facts to support a reasonable inference that a constitutional violation has occurred in order to survive this Court's review under § 1915. Plaintiff alleges he experienced unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Complaint ¶ III. Plaintiff states: "7 day locked down I was in a room with crack heads, dope sick men and gay men, we slept 4 in a room and I was for[c]ed to sleep on the floor there for seven days, then in 5 south C block I slept 4 in a cell and I was also on the floor right by the toilet. And admissions I was in a cell with at least [illegible] inmates dirty on dope, coke and homeless and yes I was on the floor there for at least 2 days before I was taken upstairs." *Id.* Even accepting these statements as true for screening purposes only, there is not enough factual support for the Court to infer a constitutional violation has occurred.

9. The mere fact that an individual is lodged temporarily in a cell with more persons than its intended design does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. See *Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 348-50 (1981) (holding double-celling by itself did not violate Eighth Amendment); *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) ("[M]ere double-bunking does not constitute punishment, because there is no 'one man, one cell principle lurking in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.'" (quoting *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 542

(1979))). More is needed to demonstrate that such crowded conditions, for a pretrial detainee, shocks the conscience and thus violates due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Some relevant factors are the dates and length of the confinement(s), whether Plaintiff was a pretrial detainee or convicted prisoner, etc.

10. As Plaintiff may be able to amend his complaint to address the deficiencies noted by the Court, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

11. Plaintiff should note that when an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint no longer performs any function in the case and cannot be utilized to cure defects in the amended complaint, unless the relevant portion is specifically incorporated in the new complaint. 6 Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice and Procedure 1476 (2d ed. 1990) (footnotes omitted). An amended complaint may adopt some or all of the allegations in the original complaint, but the identification of the particular allegations to be adopted must be clear and

explicit. *Id.* To avoid confusion, the safer course is to file an amended complaint that is complete in itself.² *Id.*

12. For the reasons stated above, the complaint is dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The Court will reopen the matter in the event Plaintiff files an amended complaint within the time allotted by the Court.

13. An appropriate order follows.

January 18, 2017
Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle
JEROME B. SIMANDLE
Chief U.S. District Judge

² The amended complaint shall be subject to screening prior to service.